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Report of the Secretary-General on the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas pursuant to Security Council press statement

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the Security Council press statement of 21 July 2011 (SC/10335/AFR/2215), in which the Council requested me to keep it informed on developments in relation to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), including through a report assessing the threat posed by LRA, regional efforts to address that threat and its impact, and United Nations efforts in that context.

2. The report provides an update on major developments in relation to LRA since the issuance of the previous report on the issue, dated 29 June 2006 (S/2006/478), with a particular focus on the past two years. It provides information on national, regional and international efforts, especially United Nations initiatives, aimed at tackling the challenge posed by LRA, and recommends steps the United Nations could take to further strengthen its support to the national and regional efforts to protect civilians and bring an end to the LRA menace. The report supplements LRA-related information contained in my regular reports on the United Nations peace operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Sudan, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU).

II. Background

3. Since it began operating in the 1980s in northern Uganda, LRA has inflicted enormous suffering on millions of civilians in several countries of the Great Lakes and Central African regions. In the 1990s and early 2000s, successive Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) operations in northern Uganda largely drove LRA into the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, and, after 2008, into the Central African Republic. Several initiatives were undertaken to peacefully resolve the conflict, including efforts to facilitate a negotiated settlement between 2006 and 2008.

4. On 8 July 2005, the International Criminal Court Pre-Trial Chamber II issued, under seal, five warrants of arrest for five senior leaders of LRA, namely, Joseph Kony, Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Dominic Ongwen and Raska Lukwiya, for

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crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Uganda from 2002 to 2005. The arrest warrants were unsealed on 13 October 2005. Proceedings against Raska Lukwiya were terminated on 11 July 2007, upon confirmation of his death. Vincent Otti is presumed deceased, although the exact circumstances of his death remain contentious and the International Criminal Court is yet to terminate proceedings against him. The remaining three fugitives are still actively involved in the atrocities committed by LRA in the subregion.

5. On 1 December 2006, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed the former President of Mozambique, Joaquim Alberto Chissano, as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the LRA-affected Areas, with a broad mandate to address the implications of the activities of LRA in the region, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, southern Sudan and northern Uganda. I renewed that mandate in 2007 and established a small political office in Kampala to facilitate the efforts of my Special Envoy.

6. In March 2008, after months of intensive efforts by regional and international stakeholders to bring the conflict to an end, representatives of the Government of Uganda and LRA finalized the final peace agreement. However, LRA leader Joseph Kony refused to sign the agreement, and in December 2008, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo launched joint military operations (Operation Lightning Thunder) against the armed group. My Special Envoy's facilitation role was consequently suspended, in the light of the lack of space for further political engagement. While those operations dislodged LRA from several parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they also had severe humanitarian consequences and many of the civilians affected remain displaced.

7. Following the military operations, which officially ended in March 2009, LRA is believed to have fragmented into several highly mobile groups operating across a wide area, from Aba in Haut Uélé district across to Ango in Bas Uélé district in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; from Birao in Vakaga prefecture to Obo in Haut Mbomou prefecture in the Central African Republic; and into Western Equatoria State and occasionally Western Bahr el-Ghazal State in South Sudan.

8. Currently, it is estimated that LRA comprises less than 500 combatants operating under the command of Joseph Kony. It should be noted, however, that there is a wide range of opinion about how many LRA fighters remain, and these figures are estimates. In September, there were unconfirmed reports that following orders by Joseph Kony, groups of LRA combatants moved from the Democratic Republic of the Congo into eastern Central African Republic and Western Bahr el-Ghazal State in South Sudan. While Joseph Kony and Okot Odhiambo have reportedly remained in the Central African Republic, other LRA senior commanders remain highly mobile.

9. Following Operation Lightning Thunder, the national security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan have continued to conduct military operations against LRA in the affected areas of their respective countries. In particular, UPDF, with the agreement of the relevant Governments and with logistical support from the United States of America, conducted joint military operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. These operations significantly reduced the strength and the operational capacity of LRA over the past three years. Despite the relative success of the military operations, the group continues to pose a serious

security threat to civilians, as the capacity of the national security forces in the affected countries is limited.

10. Indeed, national security forces in these countries face enormous tactical, logistical and intelligence-gathering constraints in operating against small bands of LRA combatants, which carry out hit-and-run attacks against isolated communities in areas where security, State presence, accessibility and communications are very limited.

III. Impact and threat of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army

11. The indiscriminate attacks by LRA on civilians constitute serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, which have caused a serious humanitarian crisis in the affected countries. Between January and August 2011, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs received reports of 254 attacks by LRA on civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, resulting in 126 deaths and 368 persons abducted. An estimated 440,000 persons are currently internally displaced or living as refugees owing to LRA attacks; 335,000 are displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone.

12. LRA attacks, committed with impunity, have typically included killings, abductions (especially of children and women), the recruitment of and use of boys and girls as combatants and in other roles, serious sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery, forced marriage, mutilations, looting and the destruction of property. Many women who were abducted and used as sex slaves face stigmatization and great difficulties in reintegrating into their communities of origin.

13. Recent attacks appear to be aimed at ensuring the group's survival through the pillaging of food, medicine and arms and the abduction of children. "Copycat" opportunistic attacks by other armed elements in LRA-affected areas are a cause for concern and have also made it difficult to determine responsibility for specific incidents.

14. LRA attacks have also had an adverse effect on humanitarian activities. There is very limited movement of commercial goods in LRA-affected regions, especially in the Central African Republic, where goods and humanitarian convoys must be protected by the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA), and humanitarian personnel and light goods have to be largely transported by air.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

15. The majority of reported LRA attacks have taken place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mainly in Haut Uélé district but also in Bas Uélé district, particularly north of Ango, in Orientale Province. These have included large-scale massacres, such as in December 2008, when reports indicated that over 700 people were killed in Faradje, Duru and Doruma, and in December 2009, when more than 300 persons were reportedly killed in Makombo and 206 abducted, including at least 80 children.

16. LRA remains the primary cause of displacement for over 335,000 persons in Haut Uélé and Bas Uélé. During the first half of 2011, some 49,000 people were newly displaced in Orientale Province. Most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) have settled in small towns, placing an additional burden on the limited local infrastructure such as schools, medical services and water facilities. About 85 per cent of IDPs stay with host families that are already extremely poor, and the remainder live in spontaneous IDP settlements in Dungu and Irumu territories.

17. The LRA threat has also caused some 20,000 Congolese to flee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to South Sudan, where 15,000 have refugee status. A further 4,800 Congolese have fled to the Central African Republic, while some 1,300 Central African Republic nationals have found refuge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after LRA attacks in their country. Between January 2010 and July 2011, some 143,000 displaced Congolese in LRA-affected areas have returned home. A further 5,000 Congolese refugees have returned from South Sudan, while 800 have returned from the Central African Republic since February. The rate of returnees dropped in 2011, with many people scared to return to their places of origin out of fear of further LRA attacks.

18. Key challenges for displaced communities in LRA-affected areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are the lack of access to farm fields owing to insecurity and the few alternative livelihood opportunities apart from agriculture. This has deepened the population's vulnerability and increased dependency on humanitarian aid. The civilian population's vulnerability is further exacerbated by the limited availability of basic social services and infrastructure, including roads, schools and health centres.

Central African Republic

19. Despite a reduction in the number of attacks, small groups of 5 to 10 LRA elements continue to perpetrate serious violence against civilians in the Central African Republic, including killings, looting and abductions. Between January and September 2011, 26 attacks were recorded by humanitarian partners in the Central African Republic, resulting in 14 deaths, 7 wounded and 122 abducted. Between 19 September and 1 October 2011, assailants attacked three villages in the Mbomou, Haut Mbomou (near Obo) and Haute Kotto prefectures, resulting in two deaths, one abduction and the displacement of hundreds. The perpetrators of these attacks remain unknown. In 2010, some 83 people were killed and 13 injured as a result of LRA attacks, with a further 324 abducted, of whom only 121 were released or escaped.

20. As at 10 August 2011, there were 19,152 IDPs in Mbomou and Haut Mbomou as a result of LRA activities, and some 4,800 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo also remained in the country. Self-defence groups have reportedly been formed in LRA-affected areas in Haut Mbomou.

South Sudan

21. In South Sudan, LRA is mostly active in the States of Equatoria and Western Bahr el-Ghazal, where three incidents have been reported since July 2011. With the overall improvement in the security situation, some IDPs have returned home to

resume agricultural activities, although others still rely on food assistance. The "Arrow Boys" or "Home Guards", a self-defence group established in 2010, and UPDF, with support from the Sudan People's Liberation Army, are helping protect communities against LRA in Western Equatoria. However, the long-term consequences and impact of having such armed civilian groups operating outside of Government command and control is a matter of concern.

Uganda

22. Most of the 1.8 million people formerly displaced as a result of LRA activities in northern Uganda have returned to their villages of origin or integrated locally elsewhere. Some 80,000 IDPs remain in six camps in northern Uganda, unable to return home owing to the presence of landmines and land disputes, among other obstacles. Steps are being taken to find durable solutions for the former IDPs, including through improving basic social services and restoring northern Uganda's agricultural productive capacity. In this regard, in June 2011, the Government of Uganda announced an additional five-year extension of the peace, recovery and development plan for northern Uganda beyond its anticipated completion in mid-2012. The second phase of the plan is being prepared with input from key stakeholders.

IV. National, regional and international efforts

23. During the past two years, the Governments of the four LRA-affected countries and regional and international partners have undertaken a range of measures to address the issue of LRA and the impact of its activities.

24. The Chiefs of Defence Staff of the four affected countries met in Kinshasa on 29 and 30 September, with the participation of representatives of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), to review operations against LRA. It was recommended, inter alia, that there should be close cooperation and coordination among the national security forces within a regional framework and that the African Union should expedite the implementation of its regional coordinated strategy on LRA. In this regard, the Joint Information Operations Centre, based in Dungu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, comprised of personnel from Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), UPDF and MONUSCO, is operational. Its objective is to coordinate FARDC and UPDF military operations against LRA, and gather and analyse information about the group's activities. Furthermore, MONUSCO, the Joint Information Operations Centre, and FARDC and UPDF field commanders coordinate activities relating to abductees released from LRA.

25. In recent months, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has repeatedly called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops deployed to fight LRA, except for those involved in information gathering that could be co-located with FARDC. The Government has indicated that only a small number of LRA elements remain in the country and that they should be dealt with as a public order issue.

26. On 11 July 2011, the High Court of Uganda, International Crimes Division, commenced the trial of former LRA commander Thomas Kwoyelo for war crimes, allegedly committed in northern Uganda, under the 1964 Geneva Conventions Act and other charges under the Penal Code Act. On 12 January 2010, Mr. Kwoyelo applied for amnesty under the Uganda Amnesty Act, and on 22 September, the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of Mr. Kwoyelo on the basis that the State, in refusing to facilitate the granting of amnesty to Mr. Kwoyelo, treated him unfairly and violated his constitutional right to equal protection of the law. The State has filed an appeal to the Supreme Court and the trial has been put on hold.

27. As at September 2011, 26,130 suspected LRA and other armed group combatants had been granted amnesty under the Uganda Amnesty Act, including former senior LRA commanders such as Kenneth Banya, Sam Kolo and Charles Arop. In some instances, these former LRA elements have joined UPDF to track LRA and have been deployed to areas where they had previously committed atrocities against the civilian population while with LRA.

28. At the regional level, the African Union has assumed a leadership role in coordinating efforts against LRA since the African Union summit held in Kampala in July 2010. During the summit, it was decided that the African Union would organize without delay action-oriented consultations between countries affected by LRA activities and other interested parties, with a view to facilitating a coordinated regional action against the threat posed by LRA.

29. Subsequently, a regional ministerial meeting focusing on tackling the LRA issue was held under the auspices of the African Union Commission, on 13 and 14 October 2010 in Bangui. The meeting was attended by senior Government officials from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda and representatives of France, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations. Several proposals were made to address the problems caused by LRA, including the appointment of a Special Envoy on LRA; the establishment of a joint coordination mechanism in Bangui chaired by the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security; and the establishment of a joint brigade or regional intervention force. The regional intervention force would comprise contingents from the national armies of the four LRA-affected countries to conduct military operations, as well as a joint operations centre in Yambio, South Sudan, tasked with gathering actionable intelligence and sharing information. Furthermore, the Joint Information Operations Centre in Dungu would be strengthened. The meeting also called for the mobilization of funds to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by LRA violence.

30. From 16 March to 5 April 2011, an African Union technical mission visited the four LRA-affected countries to discuss the implementation of the recommendations made at the Bangui meeting, particularly the establishment of the regional intervention force and centres for sharing information. The findings of the mission were addressed at a meeting of the Ministers of Defence of the four LRA-affected countries in Addis Ababa on 8 June and endorsed at the African Union summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on 30 June 2011. The Assembly of Heads of State requested the African Union Peace and Security Council to act swiftly on the recommendations.

31. The Peace and Security Council met in Addis Ababa on 27 September 2011 and received an update from the African Union Commission on the planning for the

implementation of the Ministers' recommendations. In its communiqué, the Council requested the Commission to report on the implementation of the African Union regional cooperation initiative for the elimination of LRA to enable it to authorize the operations of the regional intervention force. It also called for the United Nations and other partners to support the initiative, in particular through the provision of financial and logistical support.

32. The Integrated Core Planning Team, established by the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, is developing modalities of the African Union initiative with the support of planners from UNOAU and other United Nations entities. In particular, the draft mission plan, logistics arrangements and a strategy for the protection of civilians have, inter alia, been developed for the regional intervention force. A further technical assessment mission to the LRA-affected countries is expected to take place in the coming months, and the regional intervention force is expected to become operational in 2012. However, a number of challenges are impeding the creation of the regional intervention force, including the outstanding appointment of the Special Envoy, the clarification of command and control arrangements, and the mobilization of the necessary resources for the force to be deployed in a timely fashion and to become fully operational.

33. On 24 May 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009 (United States Public Law 111-172). On 24 November 2010, his Government submitted a strategy to address LRA to the United States Congress. The strategy comprises several pillars, including increased protection of civilians; promoting justice and reconciliation in the LRA-affected region; apprehension or removal from the battlefield of Joseph Kony and senior LRA commanders; promoting the defection, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of remaining LRA fighters; and increased humanitarian access and continued provision of relief to affected communities.

34. On 14 October 2011, President Obama notified the United States Congress of the deployment of 100 combat-equipped military personnel to the Central African region. The team would include advisers to "partner nations' forces" that are working towards the removal from the battlefield of Joseph Kony and other senior leaders of LRA and associated headquarters, logistical and communications personnel. He noted that the personnel would provide information, advice and assistance to the regional forces and would deploy in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda, subject to the approval of the respective Governments. Furthermore, they would not engage the LRA forces unless fired upon.

V. United Nations activities in response to the Lord's Resistance Army

Regional coordination efforts

35. The United Nations peace operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Sudan have met periodically, including in June 2010 at the Heads of Mission level, and have taken steps to improve information sharing and coordination to better address LRA threat. This has included establishing focal points on the LRA within the respective Missions and

establishing a coordination cell based in MONUSCO. Likewise, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has strengthened the exchange of humanitarian information on LRA-related incidents and population movements between the humanitarian country teams in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. Meanwhile, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), working with other partners, has begun preparing a report on human rights violations committed by LRA in the areas affected by the group with a view to assisting the national authorities, the United Nations and civil society in addressing the human rights dimension of the LRA problem in a more integrated manner.

36. From 16 to 27 May 2011, the United Nations conducted a multidisciplinary evaluation mission to the affected countries and met with the African Union in Addis Ababa. The Mission assessed developments regarding LRA since the 2008 negotiations and reviewed national, regional and international efforts to respond to the LRA challenge, as well as the United Nations responses and capacities in the region. The findings and recommendations of the Mission were reflected in the decision to strengthen United Nations support for the proposed African Union regional strategy and the efforts of LRA-affected countries, as well as to improve the alignment and the coordination of the United Nations efforts in order to maximize the impact of the Organization's collective response.

37. On 2 March 2011, UNOCA was established in Libreville. The Office will support the efforts of countries in the Central African region to consolidate peace, prevent conflict, and tackle cross-border challenges to peace and stability. UNOCA is also tasked to act as the United Nations regional political focal point for the LRA issue. In this regard, my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA has held consultations with regional leaders, the African Union and United Nations presences in the LRA-affected countries on the way forward with regard to addressing the LRA threat.

38. On 10 and 11 October 2011, UNOCA hosted a meeting of the United Nations presences in the Central African countries to discuss ways of strengthening a coordinated approach to United Nations support for peace endeavours in the region, and more actively addressing cross-border threats to regional security, including LRA.

39. In Addis Ababa, UNOAU coordinates closely with UNOCA and the other United Nations entities and the African Union on LRA issues. It is working closely with the African Union in providing planning support for the African Union's Integrated Core Planning Team. UNOAU also coordinates closely with UNOCA on political issues related to LRA. MONUSCO and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) also have military planners on standby to provide assistance, as required. Close coordination between United Nations peacekeeping operations in the region and the regional intervention force will be important for the success of the African Union initiative.

40. The child protection components of MONUSCO, UNMISS, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) country offices in the region have continued to collaborate on matters of common concern with regard to LRA. The collaboration is achieved through a network established and managed by the UNICEF office in Uganda, with the support of UNICEF headquarters and the Office

of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. The network ensures coordination on operational matters, including those relating to the release and repatriation of children abducted by LRA, as well as on regional monitoring and reporting of abuses committed against children by LRA to the Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict. A large network of information sources related to children has been established, drawing on local organizations, international NGOs and United Nations personnel deployed in LRA-affected areas.

41. In response to concerns expressed by child protection actors with regard to the UPDF's handling of children formerly associated with LRA, UPDF has established standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children and women separated from LRA as a result of military operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. The standard operating procedures envision the prompt transfer of children and women to international child protection agencies for care and repatriation, where appropriate. The practical modalities for the implementation of the standard operating procedures are currently under discussion by UPDF and the United Nations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

42. In keeping with its mandate, MONUSCO focuses primarily on enhancing the protection of civilians against the threat posed by LRA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Towards this end, approximately 1,200 MONUSCO troops are deployed in Haut Uélé, comprising an infantry battalion and a Special Forces company, along with three military utility helicopters. In addition, military engineer units are opening up key axis in support of the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including roads from Dungu to Faradje and from Dungu to Duru. Some local government offices in Dungu have also been rehabilitated.

43. The Rudia Umbrella military operation undertaken by MONUSCO since April 2009, mainly in Haut Uélé but also in Bas Uélé, in coordination with some 5,000 FARDC troops deployed in the area, has included a series of operations aimed at protecting civilians and deterring LRA attacks. In June, MONUSCO completed the deployment of a United States-trained FARDC battalion to Dungu, and provides logistic support to the FARDC troops conducting operations against LRA, in accordance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces.

44. MONUSCO has established a number of forward operating bases from which it conducts day and night patrols and carried out a range of protection activities, including market escorts and escorting farmers to their fields. In December 2010 MONUSCO conducted operations in the areas of Duru, Bangadi, Ngilima and Niangara in Haut Uélé, aimed at deterring any large end-of-year LRA attacks, such as had occurred in 2008 and 2009.

45. Since MONUSCO set up its base in Dungu in July 2007, it has carried out a campaign to encourage LRA combatants to defect and enter the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration programme. This disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration unit produces leaflets in local languages, and the armies operating in the affected areas

in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan are involved in their distribution. The unit has also worked to establish or enhance regional FM and shortwave radio stations in Obo, Central African Republic, Yambio and Ezo, South Sudan, and Dungu and Faradje, Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO has also enhanced the community alert network run by the Catholic church in Haut Uélé and Bas Uélé, which enables communities to inform local authorities and/or MONUSCO of an impending or actual attack. To date, 25 high-frequency radios have been installed in communities as part of the initiative.

46. The MONUSCO disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration unit has repatriated over 100 LRA elements to Uganda, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Meanwhile, many more LRA escapees, who were sensitized by disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration messaging, have self-repatriated or were repatriated by other actors, such as UPDF. Most elements who have been debriefed report that the messaging positively affected their decision to escape.

47. About 20 international NGOs, 8 United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and a number of national NGOs provide humanitarian assistance in the LRA-affected areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs in priority sectors out of hubs in Bunia, Dungu and Ango. In 2011, the humanitarian presence was strengthened in Bas Uélé, including through a $4.4 million allocation from the pooled fund in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and additional funding received through the Central Emergency Response Fund. Humanitarian actors have also contributed to the establishment of early warning systems in close collaboration with local communities. Other humanitarian activities include assistance to victims of sexual violence and other attacks.

48. In addition, together with key partners, including ICRC, United Nations child protection officers assist children who escape from LRA, and facilitate their repatriation and reunification with their families. Where capacities exist, MONUSCO facilitates the transport of these children to their country of origin. While awaiting transport, and upon arrival in their countries of origin, the children are housed in transit centres in Bunia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yambio and Juba, South Sudan, and Gulu, Uganda.

49. The remote and insecure nature of the LRA-affected areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes it extremely difficult and costly for humanitarian organizations to establish and maintain access to populations in need of assistance. Road networks are limited, necessitating aerial bridges for the transport of humanitarian staff and goods. Humanitarian agencies and MONUSCO have rehabilitated a number of roads, but the rainy season and insecurity still make many areas inaccessible. Populations receiving assistance are also sometimes at risk of being looted by LRA or Congolese security forces. In this regard, humanitarian organizations have applied the "do no harm" approach and placed restrictions on their activities where deemed necessary.

Central African Republic

50. There is limited United Nations presence in LRA-affected areas, including the Obo Area. The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) ended in December 2010, and its peacekeepers withdrew from Vakaga prefecture, where LRA has been present. An assessment mission is expected to be deployed to Mbomou and Haut Mbomou to assess the security situation with a view to establishing an office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the coming months.

51. BINUCA established a working group to strengthen coordination and share information on LRA-related issues comprising Government officials, subregional and regional organizations, the international community and the United Nations country team. The Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic has been requested to join the working group as an observer.

52. Fifteen United Nations agencies and NGOs are providing food, shelter and medical support to IDPs in four sites in urban areas in LRA-affected areas. The IDP-hosting populations, which have been severely affected through the strain on local resources, are also provided with assistance. The humanitarian response in the region has been increased recently, but is mainly restricted to urban areas and should be extended to villages with additional long-term development assistance. Humanitarian access is, however, a major challenge. The security situation remains precarious and the movement of humanitarian staff by road is rare and requires armed escorts from FACA, making costly air travel the only option in many instances.

South Sudan

53. UNMISS, which was established in July 2011, is mandated to coordinate with the Government of South Sudan and regional actors with a view to improving the protection of civilians in areas affected by LRA activity. Towards that end, UNMISS is building upon the work of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) to increase its military and civilian efforts regarding LRA.

54. UNMISS, in coordination with UPDF and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is providing medical assistance to children rescued from LRA by UPDF during military operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Also, UNMISS coordinates with UPDF and the South Sudan Police Service regarding the repatriation of former abductees to Uganda.

55. Five United Nations agencies, eight NGOs, the International Organization for Migration and ICRC provide health, food, shelter, water, sanitation and education services in the LRA-affected areas. In May, a food security assessment mission conducted by humanitarian partners recommended that a three-month food ration be provided to some 7,300 persons displaced since January until the first harvest in August. Food assistance to the long-term displaced will be phased out in line with the Government policy to reduce dependency on external assistance.

56. On 23 September the Council of Ministers in South Sudan passed a new disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policy, establishing the legal

foundation of the future national programme, which will, inter alia, support former combatants on foreign soil, including former LRA combatants. The new programme will provide assistance to, among others, LRA abductees, including non-South Sudanese citizens. In addition to joint monitoring, inter-mission cooperation between MONUSCO and UNMISS, in conjunction with the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, continues on the repatriation of former LRA elements, the most recent group of whom returned to Sudan on 8 September. In addition, UNICEF has supported the training of 22 national and international protection partners on the monitoring and reporting of LRA incidents in Western Equatoria and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States.

Uganda

57. Building upon its significant recovery and development programme and its extensive field presence in northern Uganda, the United Nations country team has collectively embarked upon a dedicated peacebuilding programme funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. The programme addresses issues that contribute to conflict and fosters those actors and dynamics that promote peace. The joint programme is carried out by nine United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and provides specialized reintegration and integration assistance for female-headed, IDP, returnee and ex-combatants' households. The programme also provides psychosocial support and interim care, and supports the reunification of children formerly associated with armed groups and other children affected by violence. OHCHR further assists the Government of Uganda in developing transitional justice mechanisms in conformity with international human rights standards and facilitates capacities for mediation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

58. With regard to protection activities, UNHCR will be phasing out its operations by 31 December 2011. The Uganda Human Rights Commission will take over from UNHCR, and has already begun implementing protection monitoring and human rights promotion activities. Furthermore, the Uganda Human Rights Commission is expected to continue efforts at resolving the long-outstanding land issues.

VI. Observations and recommendations

59. I remain concerned about the brutal and indiscriminate nature of LRA's ongoing attacks on civilians, which have resulted in deaths, abductions, looting and the displacement of some 440,000 people in the affected countries. LRA has split into small autonomous groups operating in remote areas where there is little or no Government presence in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. While the attacks continue, it is difficult to assess the exact capabilities and strength of LRA.

60. LRA is a serious transnational threat in the Central African region, which, despite having no clear political agenda, continues to perpetrate serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and instil terror and fear in local populations. I reiterate the call for decisive and timely action to eliminate this threat, arrest leaders indicted by the International Criminal Court and effectively address the challenges posed by the activities of the group.

61. The Governments of the LRA-affected countries have the primary responsibility to lead and coordinate measures to eliminate the LRA threat. They have taken important steps in this regard, including through coordinated military operations against the group. Such steps must continue. However, the national security forces of these countries lack the full range of resources and capabilities in areas such as logistics, intelligence gathering and air power, to effectively deal with the problem on their own. I therefore urge relevant partners to provide the necessary support to their efforts, including with respect to timely information sharing on the whereabouts of LRA groups. It is also important that any military action against LRA be carried out in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

62. The overall capacity of affected States to extend their authority throughout their respective territories, protect the civilian populations and enforce the rule of law must be strengthened on an urgent basis. It is no coincidence that most LRA attacks have been reported in remote areas with little or no State presence. I urge the national authorities of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan to enhance their efforts to extend the presence of State authorities, particularly with respect to civilian administration, security forces and rule of law institutions. The United Nations presences in the four LRA-affected countries will strengthen their support to these national efforts, and I urge donors to provide the necessary funding for these initiatives as well.

63. I welcome the initiative of the African Union to develop a regional strategy to address LRA, as it provides an important opportunity for taking coordinated action. I urge the African Union to work with the LRA-affected countries to finalize and implement the regional strategy as soon as possible. In particular, I encourage the African Union to expedite the appointment of the African Union Special Envoy for the LRA-affected Areas and complete the planning and operationalizing of the regional intervention force. The United Nations stands ready to support the regional strategy of the African Union through the United Nations presences in the region. I encourage the wider international community to also support the efforts of the African Union in this regard.

64. The longer-term military objective of eradicating the LRA threat should not detract from the immediate need to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of LRA attacks. The threat LRA poses should not be assessed on the basis of its size or military capability, but of the scale of the attacks it has carried out against civilians and the humanitarian and human rights consequences for the victims. The humanitarian crisis caused by the armed group has not received adequate attention from the international community, and its response urgently needs scaling-up. Appropriate rehabilitation needs to be provided to victims of LRA attacks. I urge donors to strengthen their commitment to humanitarian partners in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan in support of these efforts.

65. I commend Uganda and the United Nations agencies that have been working on the standard operating procedures adopted by UPDF on the release and handover of children. I encourage the national security forces of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan to adopt similar standard operating procedures and implement them in close collaboration with United Nations child protection agencies.

66. I encourage Member States and other actors to ensure specific monitoring, analysis and reporting in all the affected countries and develop a system of cross-border information sharing, especially relating to atrocities committed against women and children, rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage. Provision should be made for adequate resources for medical, psychosocial and other programmatic interventions for survivors, including reparations and other remedies, as appropriate.

67. I call upon all parties to provide safe and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations to the affected populations. LRA poses a significant security threat to humanitarian organizations, and the remoteness and logistical obstacles of reaching many locations makes operations costly and time-consuming. More must be done to provide assistance to those most in need.

68. While LRA combatants attempting to leave the group face several risks and challenges, I encourage the Governments of the affected countries to continue their efforts to facilitate defections of LRA combatants and their reintegration. I also welcome the efforts of international partners in that regard.

69. I call on the LRA-affected countries to take the necessary national measures to prevent impunity and strengthen the rule of law. Holding perpetrators accountable for the crimes they commit is an important deterrent to the commission of future crimes. The arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court with regard to senior LRA commanders, including Joseph Kony, should be acted upon without delay. In this regard, I welcome steps taken by the Government of Uganda to end impunity for international crimes and human rights violations committed by LRA elements. However, consideration should be given to amending the Ugandan Amnesty Act in order to ensure that it meets international standards.

70. The United Nations system is taking necessary actions to address the LRA problem in a more effective manner through its political, peacekeeping, human rights, humanitarian and development efforts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. In this connection, I am pleased to report that steps have been taken to enhance coordination and synergy among the United Nations entities, including with UNOAU and UNOCA.

71. I have also encouraged the strengthening of United Nations peacekeeping capacities within their mandates and capabilities in strategic locations in the LRA-affected areas that would help deter attacks against civilians and facilitate humanitarian operations. The United Nations peacekeeping missions in the region are, however, constrained by limited resources, competing mandated priorities, and operating areas that are confined by national borders.

72. Furthermore, I have tasked UNOCA, in its capacity as the United Nations political focal point for LRA in the region, and in close cooperation with all relevant United Nations presences on the ground, to enhance the linkages in the work of the United Nations and other partners and facilitate coordination and information sharing among them.